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A. S. CRIPPS

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LYRA EVANGELISTICA

MISSIONARY VERSES OF
MASHONALAND

BY

ARTHUR SHEARLY CRIPPS

Oxford

B. H. BLACKWELL, 50 & 51 BROAD STREET

London

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—
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TO THE

Right Reverend WILLIAM THOMAS GAUL,

Missionary Bishop of Mashonaland,

1895—1907.

αῖλινον αῖλινον εἴπε τό δ' εῦ νικάτω.

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NOTE.

I wish to thank the Editors of "The Rhodesia Church Magazine," "The Oxford Magazine," "The Essex Review," and "The Westminster Gazette" for leave to reprint a few of the following verses.

"A. S. C.

MASHONALAND.

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THE DAY'S WORK.

EPIPHANY.

NAY, not gold
At His Crib I hold;

Base metal is mine heart, and bare my hand.
I may not canopy His Altars high
With warm blue wreaths. How cold and ashen
—dry

These prayers that I had planned !

Myrrh at His Cross' foot I lay—
All my dull worth of patience harshly strong
To plod by day or night my short life long
(Grim on God's errands gay)
His own parched foot-sore way !

BENEDICTION.

(Sunrise after night-travelling).

THO' as it were a crypt I pace
 My long night vigil through,
Within the church of God I am—
 His dome of frescoed blue.

I pass deep stoups in earthly floors
 Where heavenly roof-gems show—
Niches o'er lustral waters set
 Where worms' dim candles glow—

Wind-carven pillars of the trees
 Where horned owls' Lauds are said—
Slab, plinth, and pile, the cenotaphs
 Of the long crumbled dead.

A jewelled Eikon of my Lord
 Glitters to East afar—
Louting upon one knee I hail
 The Bright and Morning Star.

Lo the brown-tussocked floor is sprent
 With holy sprinklings cold !
Lo vigil gray of draping clouds
 Is doffed for festal gold !

The ghostly voices of the doves
 Croon in the brooding light—
The Christ-taught cock that Peter chode
 Scolds the forsaking night.

At last the voices hush and pause,
 The vast church fills with dread—
Brow to the throbbing floor I crouch,
 My “Judica me” said.

How soon mine ears as I adore
 The stir of welcome fills—
God’s awful Monstrance is upheld—
 The sun is o’er the hills !

DISILLUSION.

(In the noon-tide heat).

S PENT is the morn's fresh clarity,
Slackens and tires and faints the joy.
Now the sun's strength, the flies' annoy,
The Rood's dead weight,—press hard on thee !

Now fouled and grim 'tis thine to swink—
Once the deep waters lavish-wide
Flowed for thy bath the road beside—
How scanty now are drops to drink !

Thy hero's wreath is forfeit now—
Yet having borne, bear all the way !
With no least hope of crowning bay,
Wear a man's sweat upon thy brow !

IN DESERTO.

(Afternoon).

GOD'S Fire-ball rolling smooth o'er heavens of
glass,
God's Hand-fed hawk with wide unflattered gait,
Are o'er me—as feet wrench'd and worn I pass
By black-burnt clods, by sandy furrows strait.
They do their best so lightly, bird and sun,
But all my struggling leaves my best undone.

NEAR SUNSET.

(Carrying grass to thatch a Mission Church).

SO when the sun is almost down
Bright in the slanting light we come,
Bearing our rustling grass-sheaves high
Against the splendour of the sky—
To thatch for Christ a Home.
Thou Reaper God o' daybreaks spread
Its Board with brave wayfarers' Bread,
Our hay-sheaf harvests crown
With corn-sheaf of Thine Own !

ANGELUS-TIME.

(At set of sun).

OUR earth grows virgin cool and calm,
Humble and simple, kind and new,
In bosomed hills the red sun falls—
And all at once the low bell calls
“ Now and in our last hour be true ! ”

Mother of earth, a child you stood
(The March eve glimmers now as then),
Shechinah of a sunset fell
Into your bosom there to dwell
And rise to East for wandering men !

O you that know our pit-falls dark,
While high on heavenly hills you stand,
Come, Day-Shine, at the end of day !
As God stoop'd to you all the way,
Stoop to us—husht and bright and bland !

AFTER-GLORY.

GOLD upon the rough rock-ledges—
Gold upon the crests and edges
Of the bleaching grass!

At the West's Apocalyptic gate,
In the air's wall blue and delicate—
Whence the street winds in and in so strait—
Is it gold or glass?

TWILIGHT PIECES.

I.

HERE in the purple light, the beetles buzz;
Withered and fired the upland pastures fold
Their nakedness in dress
Of doves'-down shadows, edged with red or gold.
So upon Job in that far land of Uz
Sank some rich easy Day, and left untold
All news of nearing Morrows—
With feet that slipped,
And aching shoulders dipped
Beneath their packs of sorrows !

II.

AH! Boding dulness of the fall of night!
The goats gone home, the folk have sought
their fires
And left me lonely. See the stars grow bright—
Full small and perfect as a child's desires!
What if Joy comes e'en now outrunning Woe?

* * * *

One dusk like this I think did Moses stand
In a lone goat-browsed land—
Muffled for twilight's chill in shepherd's hood.
He heard a wind go by,
And trembled as he stood—
Then trembling, bared his face, and saw on high
Upon the Mount's blank face one glowing eye,
And drawing nigh—
Heard words as tides of many waters sound
In flows and ebbing calms,
And knew the Everlasting Arms
Beneath him and around.

III.

THE trouble lessens with the light.

What shepherd in his lonely fate
But finds more solace wait
Now—on the threshold of the night—
Than when betimes or late
Sunlight or moonlight rules in full estate ?

In that wide Pleasaunce, where the calm air
 rings

With placid lips and strings,
Nor moon nor sun will be.

He of the crimson Wounds will lighten all—
Oft in that still red glow will men recall
Not noon, nor midnight, nay, but Twilight's fall !

AT NIGHT.

(Nearing home).

THE wind in my parch'd mouth is sweet,
As fresh a wind as ever blew,
The earth is quick beneath my feet,
Her strength leaps up to make them new ;
O'er the last hill I buoyant go,
With joy that mounts at every stride,
To reach my Flock, my Fold below—
Hub of this merry world so wide.

OUT OF DUE TIME.

EARTH-CHILDREN mine, how ill to come to
you

Unversed in wonders that my forebears knew—
Twilights of magic faith, and vigil nights
Starred thick with symbols of the Dawn's de-
lights !

Shame 'tis from cock-crow dusk to lead you out
Into a light-bleached afternoon of doubt :
Summon I back ere yet I dare to teach
Such day-break reverence as my faith may reach !

A PAGAN'S BAPTISM.

DREAD Potter, in Thine Hands we lay
Thine Image made—and marred—in clay.
First in Thy timely mercy break,
Then all re-make !

These votive waters wait Thee here—
'Twixt rocks and greensward—deep and clear !
Water and Dust we give for share,
Give Fire and Air !

That Tree Thou barest lit for earth
Her Furnace flame of cleansing worth :
In crimson Hollow of Thine Hand
That Flame be fanned !

Breathe, Air, from out the Land Desired,
Breathe till this glowing clay be fired !
According to Thy primal plan
Create a man !

FIRST COMMUNION.

WHEN in the West is set the sunset's sign—
Wash red, so white—those earth-soiled
feet of thine!

Night's token of the shrouded hills descry—
Go rest in grace, to restless nature die !

By token of the Heaven mooned and starred—
God's Saints and Mother keep thy watch and
ward !

By token of the dews upon the grass—
God's Spirit wake thee ere the fourth watch pass !

When o'er the rampart hills the sun climbs in,
God thy lips' threshold cross—and entrance win !

ORDINATION.

(On the Eve of a Mission Priest's Sacring).

O MAKER, mould his lips and hands with
 might

All meet henceforth to make Thee on Thy Board !
Christ, o'er his reins and heart this night be
 poured

That Blood wherewith his word shall wash men
 white !

O Thou the Dove-like, stoop from star-lit height,
Primaeval Grace in these old wilds afford,
Their life-breath breathe within him, Life's own
 Lord,

Come, a blue Dove of our own rocks, to-night !

Rush on him thro' our gorges, blessed Wind,
With all our crags' huge echoes in Thy tone,
Burn, Fire, as fires about our pastures blown !
Teach him our tongue, O Tongue of human-kind !
Shepherd, make this one shepherd all our own—
To tend our deaf sheep, feed our young lambs
 blind !

A COUNSEL OF PERFECTION.

O LITTLE goatherd would you climb to Him ?
From your low thatch'd hut is His Vision
dim ?

Why have you left your tending goats and grain,
Changed your skin-belt for stuffs of gaudy stain ?
Will you win thus the white contemptuous Christ—
So vain of temper and so close of fist ?

What if you win him, little goatherd mine ?
He's but a Devil dressed so tawdry fine.
Give locusts, all you caught at morning light,
Give your one blanket thin this bitter night !
Give all, strip bare and barer so to gain
The only Christ that is not won in vain !

LONELINESS.

ALWAYS the shadow of yourself—
So proud of all its depth profound :
But daily grow you more aware
How strait the limit and the bound.

Always the shadow of yourself—
To straiten in its own set way
Broad glories of the sun of God
That rises on you every day.

Always the shadow of yourself !
Bury it, drown it, lose it then !
“ To lose oneself to save oneself ”—
True words—how true of lonely men !

AMOR MUTAT OMNIA.

BECAUSE in me red Discord burned of late,
Because in me the Pulse of God beat low,
I crossed those ample wolds inviolate,
And knew blue Heaven no friend, the sun a foe !
The fire-swept grass grew forlorn beyond speech,
The rocks bulked grim as gathering weights of
woe,
Ere I a homestead and a friend might reach,
Athirst and weary, as the night fell slow.
Poor though he was, he made me welcome gay—
Sad though I was, I would not let him know—
How soon red Discord sank to ashes grey !
My heart grew fond once more, mine eyes grew
dim,
When I recrossed the wolds forsaking him—
Of tendernesses how the night was full,
As many as its stars innumerable,
As eager as its fires insatiate !

CHRIST'S YEAR.

ADVENT IN AFRICA.

(The Native Church).

UNTO the Church of the Arcadians, write—

“ Neatherds and husbandmen, arise, your
Light

Is come, arise and shine !

Lo I unfold a sweet and bitter Sign—

Lo how this faithless Star in Hand of Mine
Falls out and there is room !

Lo how this guttering Candle wastes away !

Come kindle all your glory in her place—

Her empty place !

Arise and shine, the encroaching Night abase !

Rise, swarthy Star, a fair Star wanes to-night
In an eternal gloom !

Ah woe ! To shine through a long night thus far,
Then fall to such a doom !

Hark how the cocks chide as the East grows
bright !

Search out and tell Me now why fell My Star !

Search out and find what envious wind made war
And compassed My rich Candle's dull disgrace !

Hark what the cocks crow as the East grows
bright—

Hark to their proclamation as they chide
Him who of old My meekness thrice denied—
'Pride! Pride!'

And is't not true?

Did not her pride and scorn of you
This that was once a lustrous Church undo?
Watch, lest your own late-risen Star be cast
Her way from Heaven at last!"

CHRISTMAS.

I.—A SHEPHERD'S HYMN.

CHILD JESU, I that drove unfed
Thy lambs and with their wounds am red—
I who would feast and rest to-day
Haste home with Dawn to tend and pray.

Why are Thy tiny Hands so cold ?
Because these hands in sleep I fold.
Why are Thy Feet so blue and bare ?
Because mine idle feet I spare.

What draw Thy swaddling bands so tight ?
Ill thoughts that tie me day and night.
What in that hay-bed chafe and gall ?
My rough sore words that lightly fall.

Love's little Lips that suck and cry,
O suck my breast of malice dry !
Full Eyes, your many Tears that spill
Spare one to drown a sluggard's will !

I came to see Thy care and want
An easy rich man ministrant,—
Empty Thou sendest me away—
Hungry at last to tend and pray !

II.—THE HOLY NIGHT.

(On a Mission Station).

BLEST is Bethlehem Town—
Thatch'd roofs, earth-walls brown—
There poor shepherds live—
There a wise man's faith
As a child's may thrive !
See the sun dips down !
Nears the blessed night,
With the slanting light—
Where the rocks divide—
Come swart flocks and pied.
Lo ! Wee Christs bestride
Cattle black or red !

Blest is Bethlehem's Shrine
Thatch'd as byre for kine !
There poor plough-boys meet,
Stretch their earth-brown hands,
Take from Heaven and eat.
At the broad sky's sign
Writ in star runes clear
“ Noon of night is here ! ”—

Cocks cried " Watch and Ward!"
Lowing beasts adored—
Serpents hissed in fear.
Birth-Robes of our Lord
Glistened on His Board—
Birth-Robes White and Red !

III.—AT THE CRIB.

FREEZING doubts have nipped the flowers
where the Child reposest,
Good-bye, Grecian violets! Good-bye, Gothic
roses!
Bring, now northern blooms are dead—nipped by
northern rime—
Rough brown southern grass of ours, flowers of
summer-time!
Shepherd, Whom Thy sheep refuse, rule Thy
goats to-day,
Wear our lilies of the field, mount our throne of
hay!

IV.—THE ROOFLESS CHILD.

(*In a Mission Altar-Piece after Luini, the Holy Child and His Mother are pictured as throned on ruins*).

O LITTLE One, how ruined is Thy shed
With sad dismantled stones !
The naked Star is glinting o'er Thine Head,
The Wind His Maker owns.

Years since was Israel ashes, heap on heap.
What now of Europe's Shrine ?

The faithless mortar cracks, the seams yawn deep,
Keen roofless nights are Thine.

Great ruins fall from Thee, O little Child,
Wise lands outgrow Thee fast,
Come, rest in grass-thatched byre or cavern wild
Of Arcady at last !

V.—COLOUR.

RED kine, pied sheep and goats, and bronze-dyed swains!
Rise on them, Star most white, this Christmas Night—
Not as contemning them,
Rather as fusing in Thy fiery Gem
All glowing creatures' stains!

TWELFTH NIGHT.

(His Star in the South).

A GAIN a blessèd Pilgrims' Night—
God's lanthorn Star for wise men's light
The road beneath my feet winds white—
Then forth to lose, if not to find !

Here in the South how near the Star
That in the North seemed nowise far !
How bitter-sweet God's mercies are—
I yet have eyes, it yet hath light.

How many years I've played the Mage,
Dreamed that I went on embassage,
My worship paid and took my wage !
Myself I gave, myself received.

Full lightly in my dreams I came
To That whereto I gave God's Name,
And sleeked its lust and glossed its fame.
Myself I gave, myself received.

I crowned as king, I censed as God,
Found fragrant myrrh and greenest sod
To bury Self; with wink and nod
I bade him haste to rise again.

O mockery! For never smiled
On quest of mine that Holy Child!
O truth! In heart and flesh defiled
The record of my quests remained!

No hope to find now; God is just.
Yet forth I stride in blessed trust
To lose myself and wear to dust,
If to His Star mine eyes hold true!

Once more a blessèd Pilgrims' Night—
Christ's lanthorn Star shows wise men light!
The road athwart the hills winds white—
On, on to lose, if not to find!

GOOD FRIDAY.

(At a Mission Altar).

THINE is the Brow, not mine,
 In sweat whereof I eat this Bread,
 My brow in festal bond red roses twine
 Given from Thy briar-bound Head,
 My drinking cups Thine Own Palms be,
 By Nails carved out for me.
 Feasted and garlanded I rise—
 To furnish forth in turn Thy Feast and Sacrifice.
 So having fed me first
 And slaked my thirst—
 Thou biddest me to serve that Thou may'st eat,
 “Child hast thou any meat?”
 I go to seek the meat that pleaseth Thee,
 To do the Will of Him Who sendeth me.

* * * *

Thou sayest this sad day “I thirst” again,
 And I, remembering how to ease Thy pain,
 Some harsh-faced Roman stained and seared
 with war
 Gave Thee his vinegar,
 (And earned a fuller comfort than he gave,)
 Go forth to seek for Thee at Thy behest
 Not only such suave souls as please me best,
 But rough sour souls that Thou did'st parch to
 save!

AN EASTER HYMN.

(Easter in South Africa falls in Autumn).

HIS wide Hands fashioned us white grains and red,

His Eyes weep rains to swell them in their bed,
Whereby the dust-grains of our lives are fed.

Alleluia !

In Earth our mother's bosom undecayed
The Seed-corn of the Flesh He took, He laid—
One white small Grain beneath a sealed rock's shade.

Alleluia !

How blind that Seed lay till this autumn morn
When forth It sprouted blade and flower and corn,

And with Its lifted Head the seal was torn !

Alleluia !

Hope of men's bodies' grains both red and white—
Shrivelled and sere and void of speech and sight,
Is that blind Seed Who burst His way to light.

Alleluia !

We, God's red millet grains, men hold so cheap,
Innumerable beneath our grey rocks sleep,
Yet He that cared to sow us cares to reap.

Alleluia !

ASCENSION DAY.

A STALL! A Cross! A Grave in quarried stone!
Here, in this land of cattle, rocks, and trees,
I clasp these verities.

If it was long ago You left Your Throne,
Yet did You count Your days by moon and sun
As I, and You an earthly course did run.
Blest Spoor of Wounded Feet my feet may travel
by!

But now this morn I watch our mighty sky
Lucent and clear of stain—
Arched o'er the breadths of our brown lonely
plain—

And to myself I say—
“ Into that great Beyond He passed to-day,
For Ever and for Ever there to reign.”

Suffer me to descry “ Beyond ” and “ Ever,”
From arched walks and green confines of to-day;
Your own o'ershadowing Rood-Screen roof my
vision

Awhile from You, dread Light, to Whom I pray!
Sunny earth bare me, stoop to me in sun!
Be't mine to mount from earth on low steps one
by one!

WHITSUNTIDE.

(About this time there are veld fires).

G RASS, sere grass !

Valleyfuls and hill-shocks as far as eye may
see !

Fires now of nights in glancing pageants pass,
Winds blow by day to speed their pageantry.

Ashes for grass !

Charred hills and scathed vales as far as eye may
see !

Kind heat of sun in healing chariot pass !

Boon dews of night ensue his ministry !

All flesh is grass !

Country-sides and villagefuls of dead brown
grass are we !

Come, Fire of God, in zeal consuming pass !

Blow, Wind of God, to speed that embassy !

Grass, green grass !

Schoolfuls and Churchfuls of God's young grass
are we !

Come, Heat of Heaven, with kindliest shinings
pass !

Fall, Dew, Red Dew—of Christ's own Agony !

EMBER-TIDES.

I.—FISHERS OF MEN.

STEDFAST o'er the fire-charred heights,
Doggèd thro' the mire-track nights,
Drag I nets for God,—
At my faithless heart a faithful wish—
O to snare these dart-down fish !
Draw their shoals so wild
From their wizard tarns defiled,
Wash within that Red Sea bright
Whose dark waves make white !
Then, their stains being gone,
O to set them every one
In fresh silver-gravelled rills
Of their own brown hills !—
Their scaly eyes enlightening to foresee
That deep eternal Lake of Galilee,
Whereinto all our shallow streams may run !

II.—THE SHEPHERD.

HOW fouled my hands ! Each new-laved fleece
how white !

How lame my feet to seek them where they are—
My sheep—among the huge rocks scattered far !
How heavy grow mine eyes each dead of night !

The fencings of the fold, I deemed so strong,
Are breached ; the lambs too lightly come and go.
What horror of great snakes the logs below !
What howls and roars make discords of my song !

Soiled, maimed, my tale of sheep untruly kept,
With a stern heart the reckoning I await ;
Fierce grows my love, as fierce as desperate.
No man shall say, these last days, that I slept.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

" Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn."—Keats.

AH me!

It was God's choice 'ere mine that I should
be

The one dim casement by whose panes they see
These maiden knights of mine — their elders'
chivalry.

Alas !

How cobweb-hung the frame ! How dim the glass
Whereat their bright eyes watch the pageant
pass—

Pageant with raiment white and palms of Hallow-
Mass !

Make clean,

O glimmering Showers of Grace and Dews un-
seen,

My panes that do deface their rainbow sheen—
Those venturous Sails that furl in haven-pools
serene !

Behold !

At my poor breath-dimmed panes what pomps
unfold !

See the Host rise a Harvest Moon of gold !
Lo the Vine's Branches bend with clusters yet
untold !

Ah me !

Flawed priest, that God should choose to make
of thee
A nursery window, whence His babes may see
Rapture of Saints that are, wonder of Saints to be !

CERTAIN PATRON SAINTS.

I.—OUR LADY.

"Now and in the hour of our death."

In that war with no discharge,
Come, our Mother dear,
For some that die are motherless,
Some have no mother near!
Thy Child He'll have us "brethren Mine,"
So all that die are sons of thine,
Then bend to all thine ear!
Smoothe the pillow, kiss the brow—
Prepare us then,
Prepare us now—
That feet be clean, that eyes be clear,
In that black path to outface the fear—
Pray for us men!

II.—SAINT JOSEPH.

(*Guardian of Christ's flight into Africa*).

WATCHFUL as Angels be !
Have I no word for thee ?
Him had'st thou failed in flight of fear,
Nor gained our southern refuge here,
What hope to-day for me ?—
I that have failed Him utterly,
Acclaim and praise His Pardon free,
Part handiwork of thine !
For thou did'st fence Him, Babe Divine,
From sword and cold and penury,
Safe for these nails of mine.

III.—SAINT FRANCIS.

ALL fellow-lives—at peace or daily wars—
Sundered as island stars—
In his blind love's blue Heaven have lot and part,
All worlds find room in one unworldly heart !

IV.—FOR SAINT CECILY'S DAY.

(November 22nd).

HOW far are viols and organs, and how mute
Our shepherds and our song-birds! Yet,
my Saint,

Your feast-day lacks not here the shrill fine flute
Of noon-tide cicale and the full-horned plaint
Of sunset dove. What gold and silver noise
Thrills with yon dipping sun, yon moon's arch
poise!

O blue November skies so tense and clear,
I see you thrilling.

Could I only hear!

But you are far: in vain mine ears must ache,
For 'tis but whispered music that ye make—
She is to you so near.

V.—SAINT AUSTIN.

SAVED as by lightning, by one flash that showed
Thy one and only Heaven - predestined
road—

Long-time thou knewest their perplexity
Before whose feet a many footpaths be !
Look back and understand and pray aright
For one who threads thine Africa to-night !
Mark how around him deepens twilight's gray !
Mark how way crosses way !

VI.—SAINTS OF AFRICA.

HAPLY amid the Saints at rest
 But little ease or joy have ye,
Antony, Cyril, Cyprian,
 Perpetua, Felicity !
Egypt your Canaan was, ye built
 In Carthage-town Jerusalem,
Glory your Libyan deserts filled—
 Shechinah of the Ark of Shem.
But now—

He hangs, the Christ of Ham,
Worm and no man—these many years,
And who is there will take Him down
 Of all the crowd He moves to tears ?
Your Christ, your God ! Five gaping wounds
 Are in His Hands, His Feet, His Side—
Eclipse of Faith, Stark Cruelty,
Slave-thirst, Gold-hunger, Japheth's Pride.
Then for sad Æthiopia cry,
 Sisters and brothers, “ Lord how long ?
Bring Thou her flocks again, and fence
 Her sheep and goats alike from wrong ! ”

GUARDIAN ARCHANGELS.

(On Michaelmas Eve).

TRAVELLING my winding track so dusty white,
At moon-rise late and red,
I hail you, Angels, on your sacred night,
Travellers, that in your own blue road delight
With whirling star-dust spread !

Michael, hill-warden, whom the serpents shun
Where high my camp-fires shine,
Gabriel, whose Greeting hails the hot day done,
And Uriel, solace in brave heats of sun,
Accept three Aves mine !

But most thee, Raphael, who the livelong way
Carest for traveller's need,
I praise for joys of each well-stridden day,
For roofless night-beds walled by boulders grey
Where sleep was sleep indeed !

WILD NATURE.

SATURNIA REGNA.

(In Mashonaland).

HAPLY 'twas here the Titans hurled their last :
The rocks remain.

Here crag-drifts at the ensuing gods they cast—
Not all in vain.

Here at this world-end, space to sleep they
found—

To fold their goats, and reap their furrowed
ground.

Passed they at last ; their earth-old wisdom fills
Their tarrying place.

Their ponderous patient lore informs the hills,
The hillmen's race—

Who love to tend the goats and thresh the grain,
And blow dull embers red of Saturn's reign.

Ah me ! New urgent gods have feoffed the land :
The end grows nigh.

Those slow full joys dolts will not understand—
They doom to die.

Our Tree-bound Titan, Who poor herdmen loves,
Suffers awhile these dwarf usurping Joves.

A MASHONA HUSBANDMAN.

YOU find him listless ; of but little worth
To drudge for you, and dull to understand ?
Come watch him hoe his own rain-mellowed
land—
See how the man outbulks his body's girth !
As new-yoked oxen ply his shoulders grand.
He frolics, revels, ravins deep in earth ;—
A kid about a swarthy mother's dugs
He tussles greedily, and panting tugs.
Swell in full streams, ye skies, his harvest mirth !

LOVE PAGAN.

(*A cattle-price is paid for brides in Mashonaland*).

SUN-SHINE and hoe-shine !

Delve and delve away !

Hoe-head that I wrought her

Busy shines to-day.

Had I but four cattle—

I would wed her now ;

She is sweet of favour,

She is strong to plow.

Eye-shine and fire-shine !

How her spoon's heft plies !

While the black pot bubbles,

While the bright fire sighs !

She 'twas brewed the brown beer,

She 'twas ground the meal !

How can I four cattle

Beg or buy or steal ?

Twelve months I'll hire me

For a miner's hire—

Take the kicks and curses,

Dare the earth-damp's ire.

I will buy four cattle,
Snatch my maid and run,
She shall reap my red grain,
She shall bear my son !

SPRING.

I.—WAITING FOR THE RAINS.

THE land is black with fires and bare,
Ere the warm rushing of the rains,
Yet blood-dipt leaf and bloom declare
How sap runs high in forest veins.

Blue Cup with sunrise-ruddied brink
Hast no drops yet for Earth to drink ?

Copper and gold dance eastern trees,
As pipes the wind and climbs the sun,
Hark ! Leaden fall of oranges !

See ! Branch-flow'rs from moon-silver spun
God, when wilt press within Thy Cup
One wine-skin cloud for Earth to sup ?

II.—AFTER RAINS.

WHERE the fire scathed, the green grass
grows,

Our black bowls bring of milk no dearth,
The hard hearts* of a hundred hoes
Beat at the melted heart of Earth !
Their nightly lauds for drunkards' fill,
Cricket and frog sing hoarse or shrill.

New births are ripening in the womb ;
Our furrowed gardens, big with seed,
Grow jocund at the thunder-gloom,
And lap and suck for mothers' need.
To hoe ! To hoe ! Ere mounts the sun !
The wine is poured ; the feast begun !

* Our Mashonaland hoes are often somewhat of a heart shape.

SUMMER RAIN-SONGS.

I.

WIDELY spread thy wings of dun-grey woof
O'er our tilths, O Rain !
Bill and coo and chuckle on my roof
All a night again !
Brood and scatter silver-fluttering sheen
O'er our valley's nest, and round its arching
brink—
Till the brown seeds hatch, the tender new-fledged
green,
Tongue by tongue, leaps forth to drink !

II.

DOWN the brown hill path that I tread
Dances a runnel blue and gilt—
The rain is fallen, fallen,
 The skies' full pride is spilt—
Deep loving colours take again
The heavens and earth at fall of rain.

O skies that I might shed myself
As you, spill pride, and only slake
Fellow-dust parching, parching,
 All for my pride's dear sake !
Then God's clear shinings might be seen
On these brave hills of heathen green !

AUTUMN.

I THOUGHT of English woods in autumns
old—

Dim blush of morn and evening bloom of gold.
Less bitter-sweet is here the season's death,
Rare here the enhancing haze, the mist-veils grey;
What harsh-rayed sunshine, winds of scolding
breath

Browbeat our summer as she wends her way !

WINTER VELD-FIRES.

WHEN the June airs are cold,
And grass is brown and dead—
Flame of the sun-flow'r's gold,
Flame of the tulip's red,
Come with the south-east wind
Blowing so fierce behind;
Stay with the night around—
Enchant this desert ground !

A DEAD CHAMELEON.

DREAMING my dingy dreams to-day I trod
Blindly, and crushed yon prism gay of God—
Whereon the mould's and grasses' tints would
pass—

Hue after hue—as on a wizard's glass !

Heaven ne'er in Saint was shown more manifest
Than Earth in thee ! Back to our old Earth's
breast,

Mirror of hers, glassing her fondest green !

Sleep and awake to wear a new Earth's sheen !

A FRANCISCAN PRAYER.

WHEN we are past
Woodlands and moonshine nights—
Consume them not nor in the dust-wrack cast !
Save them for bat and owl,
And all night beasts that prowl,
And for night-warbling birds therein to sing
All an eternal spring ;

When we are past
Fresh uplands, flaming dawns—
Consume them not nor in the dust-wrack cast !
Save them for horse and hound,
Elm rooks and larks a-ground,
And for the proud red cocks therein to crow
The east's abiding glow !

When we are past
Bare veld and breadths of sky—
Consume them not nor in the dust-wrack cast !
Save them for all shy things
Fleet-footed, wild of wings—
To hold thanksgiving there, as well they may,
That we are gone for aye !

TO SOME POET IN ENGLAND.

(From an African Arcadia).

BUT twice a thousand years too late
 You mourn your shepherds' Paradise—
These very years when, wound by wound,
 Our true Arcadia dies.

Fond child of light, you dream at home.
 Child of this world—wise Philistine—
Your brother comes. Perforce she digs
 Her own grave in his mine.

Hers are the blue Sicilian skies,
 Here Daphnis and Menalcas stray,
And reap and fold and sing and love—
 Till they be taxed away.

Mock lover of the goats and grain,
 The threshers' song, the gorges lone,
Dream on—for she is nought to you
 Till she be dead and gone !

THE WAY.

AD VIAM VIATOR.

GOD of the Road, I hail Thee, I that hold
 My roofless nights so august and so dear.
Men count their travellings trouble, toil, and fear,
But I unwilling, when my home is near,
Leave the scorch'd plains, the darkling thickets
 cold,—
Loth as one haled from shrine he sought to pray—
Roads are Thy shrines, Thou saidst “I am the
 Way.”

MISSA VIATORIS.

(In dread of Famine).

HERE, Pan, on grey rock slab we set for Thee
Thy Feast—the White Cake and the Red
in Cup—

Shepherd and Lamb, we, lost goats, offer up
In pastoral wise Thine own Divinity.

The scared moon dips, the hardy sun comes up
To spy our Secret from yon cloudy hill !
O Pan that Thou by cloud and sun mayst fill
Our hills with food, we lift Thy Cake and Cup.

Heart of all good in men and beasts and earth,
Here on the hill our hearts, we lift them up !
Life-Blood and Flesh—White Cake and Red in
Cup—
We break and pour Thee for our drought and
dearth !

WAY-SONG.

RISE and go the rock-path grey
In the dusk before the day !
On, on, through the treeless brown,
While the sun swings up—and down—
On his own blue open way !

Crackling branches parched and dry—
Pile them for your night-fire high !
Rest, your pilgrim feet unshod,
Smoke and dream and own your God
In the bright stare of His sky !

TO THE VELD.

RAGGED brown carpet, vast and bare,
Seamed with grey rocks, scathed black with
flame !

Stage-carpet, foil for all that's fair !—
O'er thy grim stretches dance in air—
Sun, moon and stars in dazzling wear,
Enhancing splendours by thy shame.

Poor, unloved ! Take my love and praise—
Not most because so faëry-fine—
Heav'n peeps at poverty of thine,
Nor because thy mute exile days
Teach best the worth of greenwood ways,
And meadows where deep waters shine !

Nay most for all thy weariness—
The homeless void, the endless track,
Noon-thirst, and wintry night's distress—
For all tense stretchings on the rack—
That gave me my lost manhood back !

LIGHTNING SONG.

SOME men—God lights
With stars bland shining or benignant moon,
On calm and clement nights—
To find their lonely homes or late or soon.
God give as many light
As walk by night !

For light I sue—
As up the hill-track thro' the storm I grope—
Sky-flashes gold and blue !
That I may stray not, blind to home and hope.
God give as many light
As walk by night !

ON A STEAM SHIP NEAR SUEZ.

(Bound for Africa).

EYES of fire and fuming breath, breasting waves
that glow,

Jewel-speckled Dragon, thro' the night you go:
Desert banks on either hand white and weary
show.

Great Saint Michael, great Saint George, count
her not a foe,
Haven let her win !

Great Saint Michael, great Saint George, let this
Dragon by !

Hearken not to south lands that against her cry—
“ Ere her snake's brood scathe our shores, tread
her down to die ! ”

Not all her blood is venom. God's Blood may
purify !

Tread but on our Sin !

THE LOST WAY.

THRO' night I stride, my way unknown,
 Gnawing my bitter thoughts alone—
Haply yet further from my bed,
And morning's Meal of Angels' Bread.
How glad my feet a roadway gain—
Deep gored and torn by wheels of wain.
In hope and fear, great miles I pace,
Wistful for some remembered place.
The way bends wide ! That bend I know
And lo to East the late moon's glow !
Above yon pasture juts her horn !

Two mercies mend my night forlorn—
I face for home, I've light to see—
Little I grudge how far I be.

TO MY CARRIERS.

YE that fared coarsely whilst I fared so fine,
Ye that bare much when I so little bore,
Ye that toil-weary drudged so I might dine,
Ye that kind feet for me unkindly wore !

Black slough, white sandy waste, and swollen
ford,
And weltering suns God set o'er us to shine—
Fury of latter rains upon us poured—
Ye were their victors, tho' men's praise is mine !

Laban I seem in Eyes of God above—
A master most uncertain, mean, untrue—
Ye were my Jacobs, I was set to prove
In sun and storm the mettled worth of you !

Ill-paid, ill-sung, take heart of grace to-day,
God's goat-herd princes, Israels yet to be,
Our journey ended, I my "Mizpah" say—
"Our Lord for ever watch 'twixt you and me!"

BY A CAMP-FIRE.

(Two fellow Missionaries meeting between their distant stations).

THE night grows dumb, our children sleep,
Yon fire is high yet, and we keep
(So used to sit alone we twain)
Our Feast of Concord once again !
A little wistfully we speak
Of how our host is scant and weak—
Lest we be sanguine of our wars
We catch the eyes of frosty stars.
Lest too despondent words be said
The kindly fire burns deeper red.

* * * *

Tyrants are Space and Time, yet we
Gazing on one another be,
Fanning our low flames, each for each,
With accord or discord of speech.
Christ Who in Space and Time's despite
Hast joined two friends this long glad night—
If without grudging we obey
To-morrow those hard masters' sway,
If each go lonely on his way—
Grant us again like holiday !

AT A TREE ALTAR.

COME, nymphs and shepherds, keep with me
The sunrise tryst of primal Pan—
To save our Syrinx souls that ran
His breathless race of victory—
Sweating red Drops of Agony.

God's Lamb, Man's Scape-Goat, driven afar,
Our flocks upon the wild hills bless !
Lo we are met in wilderness
Beneath Thy Tree of Thorns and War—
Whose leaves our nation's healing are.

THE VELD FIRES' VISION.

MY head was dull, the moon was dazzling
bright—

I saw great towers, heard bells of Oxford town—
How gleamed the meadows broad, the sun gone
down !

Thro' silver oozings of a river went
My wayworn feet with ripplings of content !

Good feet to forward go, the while my mind
Rebuilding those rich streets lagged far behind !
I woke to smoke-drifts and the red flames' ire,
About my path were pillared clouds of fire—
My home beyond—thatch'd roof and rock and
tree—

Waited in heavenly simplicity.

RETROSPECT.

(*After a holiday journey across the Sawi River*).

WHAT of those days ?
 Spoilt children everyone—
Light come, light going, blinded by the sun
Of their own joy—as little sleepy elves
Sated at whiles with too much green and gold
Become by usage old,
Dazed too at whiles by pleasures fresh and new
And weary of themselves !

 My God, renew
And wash the life in them, and shape and mould
Those small ill days to Visions purged and strong—
Of heights and deeps and spaces wild and wide—
Marches that won indomitable plains,
A siege that scaled a fiery mountain's side,
Of roofless Night's innumerable gains,
Of Dawn—a rosebud ere its folds divide,
Of sunken Sawi with his torn bright skeins,
Of simple flocks God tends and man disdains,
Of humble joys that met, and shamed my pride !

THAT COUNTRY FROM
WHENCE WE CAME OUT.

A REFRAIN.

TELL the tune his feet beat
On the ground all day—
Black-burnt ground and green grass
Seamed with rocks of grey—
“England,” “England,” “England,”
That one word they say.

Now they tread the beech-mast,
Now the ploughland’s clay,
Now the faëry ball-floor of her fields in May.
Now her red June sorrel, now her new-turned hay,
Now they keep the great road, now by sheep-path
stray,—
Still it’s “England,” “England,”
“England” all the way !

A LYKE-WAKE CAROL.

(*South African Spring is England's Autumn*).

ROW old and die, rich Day,
Over some English field—
Chartered to come away
What time to Death you yield !
Pass, frost-white ghost, and then
Come forth to banish'd men !

I see the stubble's sheen,
The mist and ruddled leaves,
Here where the new Spring's green
For her first rain-drops grieves.
Here beechen leavcs drift red
Last week in England dead.

For English eyes' delight
Those Autumn ghosts go free—
Ghost of the field hoar-white,
Ghost of the crimson tree.
Grudge them not, England dear,
To us thy banished here !

ENCAMPED IN APRIL.

(*English Spring is South African Autumn*).

WRAP your eyes, lie deaf and blind !
 Fear the hums and stings !
Yet fear more the thrush's bill
 That in England sings.

Press the torn hem to your eyes
 On your cold hill bed !
Lest they spy some painted mead—
 Gold and white and red.

All in vain ! With Sleep's grey fall—
 Birds flute, flow'rs arise.
When you wake, the Autumn stars
 Shine on shining eyes.

ESSEX.

I GO through the fields of blue water
 On the South road of the sea.
 High to North the East-Country
 Holds her green fields to me—
 For she that I gave over,
 Gives not over me.

Last night I lay at Good Easter
 Under a hedge I knew,
 Last night beyond High Easter
 I trod the May-floors blue—
 Till from the sea the sun came
 Bidding me wake and rue.

Roding (that names eight churches)—
 Banks with the paigles* pight—
 Chelmer whose mill and willows
 Keep one red tower in sight—
 Under the Southern Cross run
 Beside the ship to-night.

* Essex cowslips.

Ah ! I may not seek back now,
Neither be turned nor stayed.
Yet should I live, I'd seek her
Once that my vows are paid !
And should I die I'd haunt her—
I being what God made !

England has greater counties—
Their peace to hers is small.
Low hills, rich fields, calm rivers
In Essex seek them all,—
Essex, where I that found them
Found to lose them all !

OXFORD IN AFRICA.

TOWERS and crimson heaven and a two-day
 moon,

Misting river meadows where the dusks are slow !
How could I renounce you ? Life is short enow—
Anywise our God-speed must have seemed too
 soon.

At your shrine-gate watching, never voice I knew,
Never voice nor vision. Were I lingering still—
I a withering Tithon, you with Time at will—
Would you yet reward me for my truth to you ?

Long ago I left you, now at last you speak
O'er the wine-dark furrows of th' estranging main
Mortal feet that flee you, turning not again,
Lo your feet immortal to the world's end seek !

THE ROUND.

LIFE'S a whirl, a whirl, a whirl—
How dizzy goes the round—
Hearing the foreign speech,
Tramping the foreign ground !

Life's a whirl, a whirl, a whirl—
Spin on and round and come—
In feigning or in sooth,
To sleep at last at home !

AFTER THREE YEARS.

O FIELDS and little street and faces kind—
How are you changed and I !
You that three years this day I left behind
Beneath a sobbing sky.

We meet no more.

Time's growth and Time's decay
Re-fashion hearts and scene :
We cannot meet again, we are to-day
Other than we have been.

Those were our sires, who took that long farewell
Three years agone, but we—
For love of them that loved each other well—
Yearn yet across the sea.

AT MICHAELMAS.

(*Harvest Thanksgiving Day in an Essex village*).

A RE all those fallen Angels fall'n so far
That none regrets his star ?
Is there to-day no would-be Reaper blithe
With heavenly hook and scythe,—
Who cries “ Alas ! I reap but housetop grass ! ”
Love-in-the-Ruins, unto Thee I pray
For exiles all to-day !

This very day—where Essex stubbles shine—
On one small happy shrine,
The shingled spire with mellow mirth will call,
From street and farm and hall,
Folk unto priest—for reapers’ Lauds and Feast.
What time my county sings her carrying song—
Christ, is it sin to long ?

FOLD SONG.

D RIVE the goats to the huts and the bulls to
the stall !

Bring home ! Home !

Gray blue doves from the maize garths fly,
Pied crows and black to the woods go by,—

Then home ! Home !

Drive thy fancies to west down the Heav'n's red
field !

Bring home ! Home !

Men may see far in this blindman's light—
Six thousand miles they are short to-night—

Then home ! Home !

DREAMS OF PASSAGE.

WISTFUL dreams I send you;
Must they come to you
All embittered by the brine
Of those leagues of blue ?

Wistful dreams you send me;
Must they come to me
Salt and bitter from the foam
Of the wide sad sea ?

Nay, their latest travels
Scent them ere they come.
Home's own roses hedge you,
Me—green hopes of home.

AT CHRISTMAS.

STREW our green earth——flowers! Our blue
skies——incense

Mount in wreath and spray!

Set the Figures Three within the Rock-Cave

All a Christmas Day!

And its O to dream of English gables under snow-
clouds gray—

And its Ah to wake and know them years and
years away!

Dark babe-burthened mothers, hail the Mother—
Fair as England's May!

Let us back again to where we once clung
On a Christmas Day!

And its O to dream of those same mothers on
whose breasts we lay—

And its Ah to wake and know them half the earth
away!

Small brown goatherds, dance and sing to Jesus
On His Bed of hay!

You to-day He heeds, as once He heeded
Me on Christmas Day!

And its O to dream of Things we once saw, ere
we said God "Nay!"

And its Ah to wake and know them half a life
away!

Poor-men brothers, up and hie to Joseph—
By the Crib to pray!

Gentler hearts and sterner wills we'll ask for
On our Christmas Day!

And its O to guess what man I might be, would I
but obey!

Is it I that heed at last the Bidding? Wend at
last the Way?

THE CHANGELING.

TO this south land o'er the sea
Came I, bringing Song with me,
But in the night the fairies came
Under the Southern Cross's flame,
And changed him for another one.
Ah such an one !

If Song may not leave his home—
Why lend Regret with me to roam ?—
Who feigns with whistle fever-thin
Blackbirds the leafless branches in,
So loud and sweet ere March is gone—
From England gone !

TO A HOME MISSIONARY.

(Rejected for foreign service).

"**A**RE those all goodly well-steered boats that
run

To cast their nets in Christ's far fisheries?"

"Nay, there's my crazy 'Pride of Life' for one."

"Are all the stay-at-homes but hulks at ease?"

"Nay, there's your 'Faith' white-sailed beneath
the sun—

Netting miraculous draughts in inland seas."

RECESSINAL.

(*For the Pan-Anglican Conference in England*).

NOW from purple wear to penitence !

Now from crimson robes to sacrifice !

Now from jewelled cross to crosses of offence !

Now from heroes' words to heroes' agonies !

Now leave palace-walks for wilderness !

Now leave banqueting for camp-fire bread !

Now leave echoing aisle for some dark hut's
recess !

Now leave multitudes to seek one sheep unfed !

Now from Dome of Paul to task of Paul !

Peter's Abbey-Church to Peter's fate !

Never will you win without your losing all :

Give Heav'n's Vine to grow your dung of earthly
state !

SCORN AND PITY.

TO CERTAIN NEW SHEPHERDS.

MUST ye too wend to Bethlehem ?
Is there no room then in the Inn—
That ye must crowd our stable dear ?
Go rather to Jerusalem
And with the Sadducee your kin
Renounce our Star for candles clear !
Nod o'er your scrolls till blush of day,
Disprove our dotage as ye may—
We'll to our frantic Bethlehem
Where low men love, and high men fear,
And ass and oxen knee the sod !
Seek Herod and Jerusalem !
Priests, that can see no Virgin here,
And but the shadow of a God !

NOT BY MIGHT.

WITH sjambok for your minister you teach ?
A Christ of Stripes you preach ?
With lash for talisman you exorcise
That which your God defies ?

Years since a hollow Crucifix was made
To sheathe a ready blade,—
In Italy conjoined to bless or wound
Dagger and Cross were found.

Why not Christ's Form on your whip's handle set
In ebony or jet ?
What voice in Africa a caveat saith
To banns of Lash and Faith ?

Ah me ! If Fear your mountains may remove—
Will he not cast out Love ?
That a Power reigns by tenure of your rod
I grant—but is he God ?

BLACK AND WHITE.

SING one "Alas" and with that have done !
This is no new thing beneath the sun—
With the Weak hard by—did you think the Strong
Would keep his hands from the throat so long ?

Sing not "Alas" for a starving land,
For a tax to pay with an empty hand !
To slave in a mine may be evil cheer—
But the end of a life it is always near !

Save an "Alas" for the Strong and Free
That were curst with the Weak man's company !
They robbed as lightly as drew their breath—
My God ! Are they dead with the *second* death ?

ECCLESIASTES IN MASHONALAND.

(*Some have thought that our country is that Ophir whose gold enriched Solomon*).

THE Fever grips. The Murrain smites.
The Locusts blind our Heavens of blue.
With the Mine-damp·rise up o' nights
Ghosts of the Men enslaved it slew.
Come Plagues a many—Plagues a few—
We lose to win another Day.
Justice, and Freedom, Commerce too—
At Shrine of each in turn we pray.

Hark the wind howls about our Home
Wrench'd from weak Hands by Hands of Power!
“Pile Stone on Stone! The Hour is come!
For plucking down will come an Hour!
Now o'er the Tilths your Tax-clouds lower,
Go, wring the Labour while ye may!
The Sweet for you! For them the Sour!
What cometh after who shall say?”

O King whose Voice is in the Wind
Why brood and mutter and complain?
Burthens of happier Omen find!
Behold the Vision of our Gain—

The Diamond Shower, the Golden Rain,
 The teeming Byres, the Floors heaped high!
 "Vanity," wails he, "All is vain!
 Soon the Long Home! The Mourners' Cry!"

O Sage whose Seal the Demons bound,
 Who in Jerusalem wast Lord,
 Why cumber with thy Sighs the Ground
 Wherefrom thy Golden Affluence poured?
 Splash'd by the Slave-whip, stained of Sword—
 That yellow Dust they shipped thee came.
 Preach not! Confess that Dust abhorred
 Worth Æons of the Worm and Flame!

Grim Haunter of our Mountains whence
 Those Galleys laded Gold for thee,
 Gibe not at us. Our Girth immense
 Of Empire, is it Vanity?
 "What was," he wails, "again will be
 There is nought new beneath the Sun.
 Fruit of his Labour who shall see?
 To bitter Tides bright Rivers run!

"Oppression maketh Wise Men mad
 When Judgement's Hands are judged unclean—
 At Wisdom's Price, eat, drink, be glad!
 Hath e'er the crooked straightened been?

One Fate is set for most, I ween,—
For Rogues and Clowns, for High and Low,—
To feed the Flowers and Grasses green
After ten feverish Years or so.

“ Sum of the Ways I proved I tell,
‘ Many Inventions, little Cheer :’
The Way of God I proved not well,
Yet know I somewhat of its Fear.
End of these High Ones’ matter hear—
Whose Plagues pass not, whose Curses stay, —
To them, unthinking, God is near,
And there be Higher Ones than they !”

SHEPHERDS TO SHEPHERDS.

(*An appeal to Oxford Scholars on behalf of the Mashonas
as against certain Mining Interests*).

YE that love the sheepfold songs of the dead
so well—

Ye that dream white nights of yours in deep
Tempe's dell—

Ye that in your visions ply shepherd's crook and
reed—

Strive and cry for Arcady in her year of need !

Rally to them in their strait, pasture, tilth and
stall,—

Rally to our succour, ye, we be shepherds all !

Arcady ? Yes, Arcady, ours the sacred name !

What if this grey river-chine hath not Ladon's
fame ?

In the chill vext mornings here goats and goat-
herds come,

In the still bright evenings hence wend our cattle
home.

Hark the clash of locking horns ! How the red
bull sways !

Chase the thieving goats away from the tufted
maize !

Yon black bull shall glut the feast that shall bring
the rain,

Yonder goat make glad his ghost, his that sowed
the grain.

Think ye that our threshing-floors are of song
forlorn ?

Hark that music where our clubs bruise the mil-
let corn—

Beating till the green rough heaps spill their
treasure brown,

List the Lityerses-chant as they thunder down !

List a lilt of robber men come to drive the cow !

List a lilt of one that's loth, will not marry now !
Boorish though the burthens be, ye will under-
stand.

Shadow of Theocritus ! Ye will save our land !

Who be these that preach for us drudgery divine,
Urging for our fallen state the redemptive mine ?
Are the gods grown angry then that the goats we
feed ?

Are the gods grown angry then that we sow the
seed ?

What your part or lot with these—dolts that never
knew

Secrets from the open sky won by shepherds true ?

What have ye to do with these—Jews that never
read

Aught of wild Thessalian spells, aught of Bion
dead?

By the red ore that we forge, dashing stone on
stone,

By the thatched towns on the hills that were once
our own,

By our furrowed garden-ground, by our dappled
flocks,

By the graves our cold folk fill under burning
rocks,—

Rally to them in their strait, pasture, tilth, and
stall,

Rally to our succour, ye, we be shepherds all

A PILGRIMAGE.

(To take leave of Sir Marshal Clarke, K.C.M.G., Resident Commissioner).

DARK was our England of a vanish'd day
When priests on rich men fawning, poor
betrayed
(For whose dear sake the Word our flesh was
made).

Good was it then on some clear morn of May
To take aneath the downs the Pilgrims' Way,
And seek a Shrine where serfs and masters prayed
(To all that weary land a great rock's shade)
True Thomas' grave who said a tyrant Nay.

In this our land where sleeked is rich men's pride,
And scorned the washing of the lowly's feet—
I, arch-betrayer, half remorseful hied
On pilgrimage thro' storms and summer heat—
To hear one old heart true to England beat,
To see one grey rock front the enslaving tide.

TIME OF FAMINE.

I.—GOLDEN DROUTH.

BRIGHT thro' the screen of the passion-flow'r's
leaves

Chivalric glances the sun at her fanciful face,—
Deepening the cool of the porches—heightening
the spray's clinging grace.

Chivalric Sun! While here on the deep-furrowed
hill—

Wilts the millet and withers the maize at your
tyrant will :

Daily pomp of your gold for the white drones—
what is its cost ?

This—to us black men and churls that the bread
we have swinked for is lost !

II.—CHRISTMAS IN FAMINE.
(1903).

I N yon thatched hut hear Jesu's cry!
See Mary's dark breasts withered dry!
See how they fast that have not learned to pray
Child Jesu, this my Christmas feasting be—
To keep Thy fast one day, instead of Thee,
And that day—Christmas Day!

III.—ON A MEALIE CROP.

(*In our time of dearth in 1904, the maize cobs ripened very early*).

UP, up, haste ever day by day !
Win inches slow by night unseen !

The rain clouds speed you ! Racers green,
Hopes of our land so hunger-lean !
The big drops bless your dusty way !

* * * *

Tho' all their tears the skies should spill,—
Two months to tarry !

At the gate

What hoofs are those ? What news from Fate ?
“ Ay, let them race with all their will—
Yon pale horse shall outstride them still.
For ere their harvest course be sped
Night will be fallen, blank and dread,—
Supperless babes be hushed in bed—
Who cried so long and watched so late,
But might not wait, but might not wait ! ”

IV.—FOUND STARVED.

(In a Mashonaland garden).

DIRE Fate, availing not to bend him, broke!
He bowed his neck to no step-father's yoke
Submissively for fill of blows and bread.
On Earth his mother's love in love he leaned—
A suckling from her furrowed breast unweaned.
This year her dugs ran dry—and he is dead.

V.—LES REVENANTS.

(*The wraiths of the victims of the Famine*).

HARK the hungry Wind's song, snatching at
the leaves

In the sighing maize-garth, thro' the grey rocks' wall:

As we rend the ripe stalks, how it gibes and grieves,

“ All for you and nought for us!” Is it Wind at all?

Grey-heads twain and breast-babes three! Ye
that might not stay

Till the green sheaths ruddied and the white
gems grew!

Ye whose rustling fingers fright the crows away!

Might you only tell us how, we would share with
you.

MORS AFRICANA.

AFTER one pattern is the fate
Of many here or soon or late.
Witch-fevers whence we slipped of old
With tightening clench make good their hold—
And charm us as March hares to run
Fierce sandy courses in full sun.
In out, out in, a clueless maze—
Full four-score years in twenty days.

* * * *

As tho' in hares' green forms we drop at last.
How cool and soft the earth and grass, how fast
Our sleep ! Our courses done—
God knows if lost or won !

SET OF SUN.

REQUIESCAT.

(*For a Sister of Charity in England*).

THERE in some garden set with rose and yew,
With gravelled ways and grass-plats trimly
shorn—

Christ be your rest and cheer!

Here in a wild land that you never knew,
Among the coarse grass and the stunted corn,
I gave you one true tear.

Ah! Save for Christ His Poor, too far we stayed
From one another.

Near you draw again,

O calm to work or pray!

'Tis but a dress (how worn!) in England laid,
New drest you follow in the Lamb's White Train—
Whose Glory comes again and yet again
My ill-served Altar's way.

RESURGAT.

(For C.J.R.).

GOD be with you in your need !

When God's mills have ground you through—
All the coarse cruel chaff of you—
Be there left one seed to sow !
Which in season may unfold
Your visionary might of old—
Like some fecund vine to sprawl
On the widths of Sion's wall—
In penitence imperial !

A BISHOP'S LEAVE-TAKING.

(Lent, 1907).

THE rains are gone or going, and the wind
Blows harsh to winter now : but harsher far
Have tidings flown our folded peace to mar ;
Soon comes the irrevocable hour unkind
When you, our Father, leave your flock behind !
Shepherds may stay, but not as yours their care.
What of the goats that yet so heedless are ?
What of us sheep so newly washed and signed ?

Kind hearts as yours wear fast, 'tis hard hearts
thrive !

You fought our battles, ours who dully learned
And tired and spent you. Our blind fault forgive !
O dumb men's voice ! Your manhood's words that
burned

Be for your eld to fires of comfort turned !

You were so proud to lead us—scorned to drive !

ON THE SAILING OF A BISHOP FOR
HOME.

(*July, 1907*).

NO Michael he, but he could shine in war.
No Raphael he, but he could travellers
cheer.
No Gabriel he, but he with joy drew near
Men from their homes and God alike too far!
No Angel, but a man! No heavenly star,
But a brave candle burning fast and clear
In our small candlestick so new—yet dear
To Him whose charge both stars and candles
are!

O loss of ours that lack an Arthur sped!
What wars remain! His Table Round were we.
Will some raw pedant* ruling in his stead
Rule out of date our old knight-errantry?
Blest is his ship that seeks on yonder sea
A north of summer and a west of red!

* These lines were written before the choice of a chivalric successor.

DEATH ON A MISSION.

YE that cry and sing for your own dead
Shrill and fresh !
Sing awhile what time my times are sped !
Ye that sing what time ye thresh your corn,—
Should God thresh—
Sing awhile about the husk out-worn !

Ye that claim again the grave so soon,
Weeds wind-sown,
Grant one flower among you for my boon !
Sisters green, coine wrap the bed above !
Brothers brown,
Ask awhile for him that loved you—love !

IN THE HEAT.


BE in this hour forgot
Day's yet remaining hours so hot—
The sweat, the drouth, the ever blistering hands!
Remember now those dewy morning lands!
With what a happy face the sun arose—
Remember now!

* * * *

Thy long last hour of labour ended, thou
Wilt haply reach that crimson twilight-close
For which conspire the kindly days of men—
Remember thy forgettings then!

NUNC QIMITTIS.

MINE eyes have seen—My God I glorify!
Mine eyes have seen—Trust me! I would
not lie.

Nay, trust me not, my tidings prove and try!
An you would see, come the same way as I—
Way of the white fields where the sheaves we tie—
Come!

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